



Wednesday October 27, 2021

To SouthEast Effective Development (SEED) and COAST Property Management:

A number of your tenants at Rainier Court, which includes the Dakota, Columbia Gardens, Spokane, and Courtland Place buildings, have recently reached out to my Council office after having struggled in vain for years to get you, as the owners and property managers of their buildings, to address their concerns. I stand in full solidarity with the tenants' courageous organizing, and **I expect you to meet all their demands in full without any delay, including rescinding the \$100 rent increases.**

Your tenants in these buildings are working people who help make our city run. They are seniors. They are families with children. They belong to immigrant communities and communities of color. The vast majority of the tenants are of low income, and are eligible for assistance under the federal Section 8 housing voucher program. Your tenants have attempted for years to address pervasive problems in the apartments, such lack of heating, mold, bed bug and cockroach infestation, hallways with accumulating garbage, the absence of internet access for low-income residents, broken stoves and refrigerators, non-functioning toilets, and leaking ceilings. For many of the renters, the daily reality of living in your buildings has been a nightmare.

Not only have both SEED and COAST failed to address the numerous problems and housing code violations, many of them egregious, you have had the temerity to send \$100 rent increase notices to most of your nearly 500 tenants!

My office has worked with your tenants to submit their complaints to the City of Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections (SDCI), and my staff will be diligently following up. **Please remember the [ordinance sponsored by my office](#) and approved by the City Council in 2016, which prohibits rent increases at buildings with serious housing code violations.**

Both the tenants and my office expect you to immediately begin addressing the problems that you have neglected to solve for years. Below is the **full list of the tenants' demands**, all of which you have a responsibility to meet urgently.

- 1. No more rent increases!**
2. Tenants should not experience discrimination based on race, nationality, language or otherwise.
3. Tenants must be treated fairly and kindly by management.
4. Sufficient maintenance staff to address repair concerns in a timely manner.
5. Approve access for tenants to install affordable internet hookups in units.
6. Communication from management (inform tenants when there are staffing changes!)

An equal opportunity employer

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SEATTLE CITY COUNCIL | DISTRICT 3

COUNCILMEMBER KSHAMA SAWANT

Tenants my office has spoken to report feeling exhausted, frustrated, and utterly disrespected, and experiences of outright discrimination as a result of renting from SEED and COAST. Tenants call your offices dozens of times for a single maintenance request, but no one picks up. The COAST office is across the street from their buildings, but if they attempt to reach someone in person they are told that no one is available who can speak with them. Even if they are able to speak with someone and they are told that their concerns will be addressed, solutions rarely materialize, and they are forced to return again and again to repeat their request for weeks, months, and sometimes years.

Within the last year, tenants who previously had access to low-income internet, which is their right as low-income tenants, have been told they no longer have that option. Tenants previously paying \$9.99 per month for internet access were told they could either start paying \$45-\$60 per month, or opt out of internet service entirely. It has become clear to my office that the main obstacle to returning tenants' low-income internet access is SEED's refusal to allow it as an option as a result of a deal you have made with Comcast. Many of your elderly and disabled residents are now living completely without internet access in their homes, because they are on fixed incomes and could not possibly afford a five-fold monthly increase to their internet bill. This price gouging is even more stunning considering it has taken place during the COVID pandemic, where access to the internet has been more critical than ever.

Many of your tenants have lived in their buildings for a decade or more—many are families with children who have only ever known Rainier Court as their home. In that time, the management has changed again and again, but the discrimination, deteriorating living conditions, and violation of their rights as renters and working people struggling in this city has continued unabated. As elderly, disabled, low-income renters in affordable homes—as renters and working people, period—the neglectful treatment and living conditions they have been forced to endure under your management is completely unacceptable. For SEED and COAST to double down on this injustice with an enormous rent increase, for tenants on fixed incomes, can only be described as gratuitous and cruel.

I expect you to meet all the demands of the tenants in full without any delay, including rescinding the \$100 rent increases.

Sincerely,

Kshama Sawant
Seattle City Councilmember

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